THE END
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THE END

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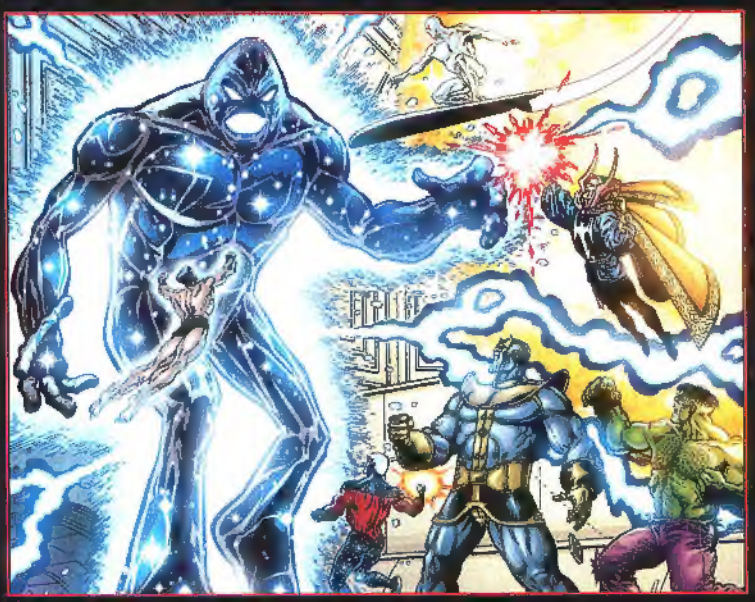
PREVIOUSLY...



AKHENATEN

THANOS

DR. DOOM

THOR

ZEUS

SILVER SURFER

DR. STRANGE

NAMOR

HULK

CAPTAIN MARVEL

The Ancient Pharaoh Akhenaten had returned and conquered the Earth, using god-like powers granted to him by a mysterious alien organization, the Celestial Order.

The Fantastic Four, the Avengers and all the X-Men perished, defying Akhenaten.

Even mighty Zeus and Thor narrowly escaped death, while calling together the elder gods of different pantheons in order to resist Akhenaten's rule. They then sought the aid of Eternity and Infinity.

Doctor Doom traveled back to ancient Egypt and failed to slay the once mortal Akhenaten.

One last hope remained: Thanos, Captain Marvel and the core Defenders sought out the source of Akhenaten's might and hoped to usurp or destroy it.

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CONTAMINATION!
I sensed I was on the *threshold* of *omnipotence*.
Not even the powerful *Celestial Order* would keep me from passing into *the beyond*.
How was I to know this dream was *contaminated*, mutated into *bitter disappointment*?
The *cancer* was subtle and secret, yet *terminal*.
But in my ignorance, *possibility* yet lived.
It didn't matter that a *Celestial Order member* had discovered us trespassing within their massive *holy satellite*.
THE END

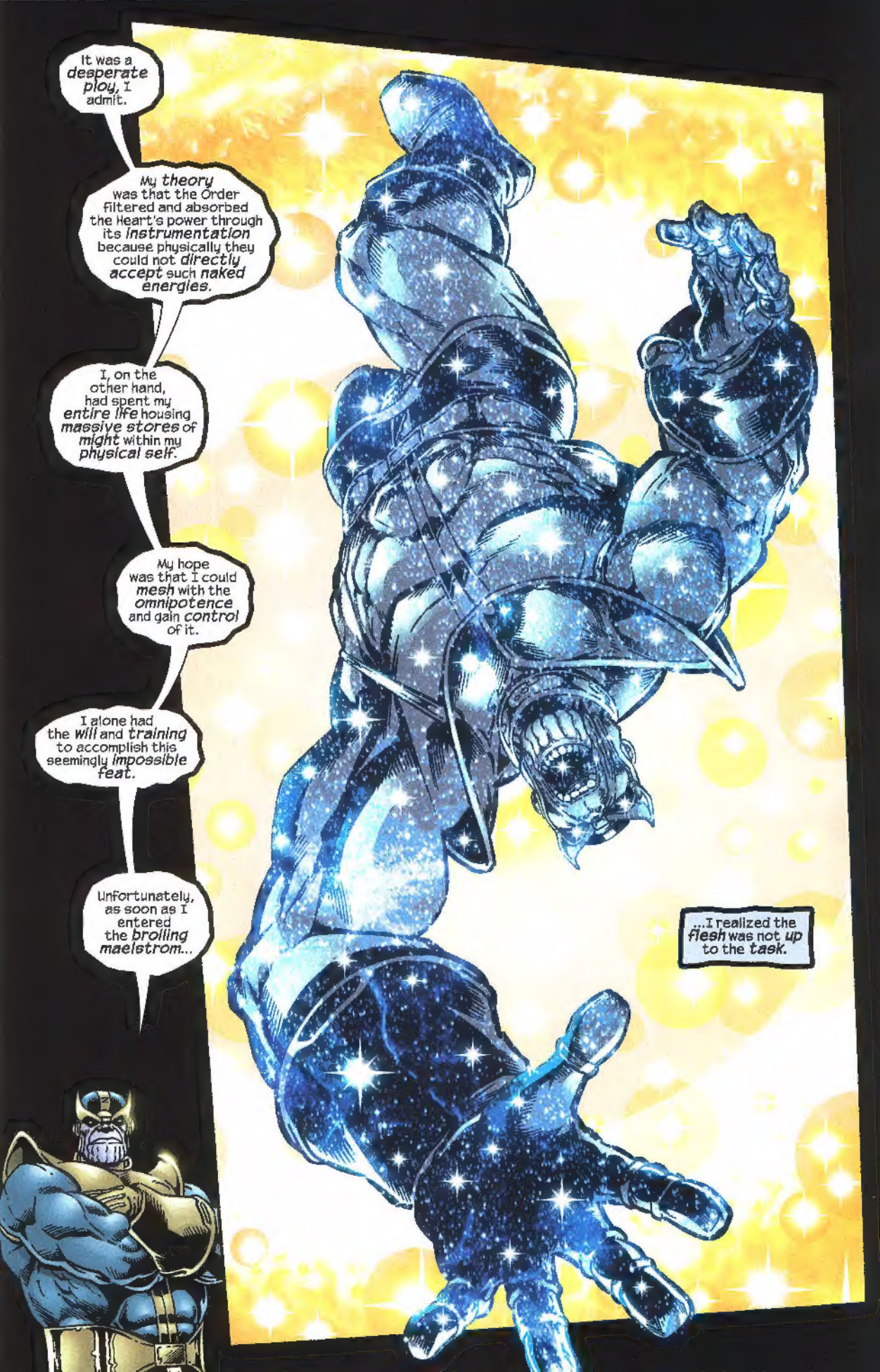
Captain Marvel and the Defenders struck with lightning speed...
...catching the powerful energy being by surprise, and so saving us from instant annihilation.
I alone understood just how precarious our situation truly was.
So instead of engaging in futile combat...

I set my sights on a higher priority:
The instrumentation which funneled the Heart of the Universe's power to the Order.
I denied them omnipotence.
More incoming!
Our enemy is cut off from the infinite, warriors, but take great care!
They still possess impressive stores of personal energies!
Most definitely.
Hulk smash now?

In truth, I harbored no ill will towards my comrades.
It was never my intention to abandon them.
It actually pained me to witness Namor's fall.
Form up a circle around me!
These creeps keep teleporting in on us!
But it was clear that the Order would soon overwhelm us.

The only options open were betrayal or defeat.
Dr. Strange's death solidly confirmed this in my mind.
Cold-hearted calculation was called for.

Pawns had to be sacrificed.
Marvel, hold them off as best you can!
The universe is depending on you!
What the...
Where the hell are you going?!
NO!
YES!
The Infinite and I were about to become one.


It was a *desperate ploy,* I admit.
My *theory* was that the Order filtered and absorbed the Heart's power through its *instrumentation* because physically they could not *directly accept* such *naked energies.*
I, on the other hand, had spent my *entire life* housing *massive stores* of *might* within my *physical self.*
My hope was that I could *mesh* with the *omnipotence* and gain *control* of it.
I alone had the *will* and *training* to accomplish this seemingly *impossible feat.*
Unfortunately, as soon as I entered the *broiling maelstrom...*
...I realized the *flesh* was not *up* to the *task.*

Disincorporation can only be described as the most unsettling sensation one can imagine.
Yet still I maintained my focus.
I would not fall victim to the Heart.
I was determined to be its master.
And through sheer force of will, I prevailed.

Starmen run away!
As if they sense something we don't. Perhaps--
The satellite!
It was engineered to contain the power of the Heart of the Universe!
Those energies have escaped but the forces that imprisoned 't are still--

My pawns perished but I prevailed unification.
Extreme disorientation.
My entire being screamed out for rest, a chance to adjust.
But I had to deny myself this luxury.
Dark deede required my attention.
But the cost..
The pain...

My first stop: The Valley of the Kinge, 1334 B.C.
History repeated itself
Doom's failed assassination attempt.
His target again a mortal Akhenaten.
Everything just as it was.
Yet still Doom continued his futile quest.
He had no choice in the matter.
For he was but a mere mortal.
Incapable of looking beyond the confines of his individual reality.
Trapped by the same mistakes.
Driven by the same desires.
Racing toward the same destruction.

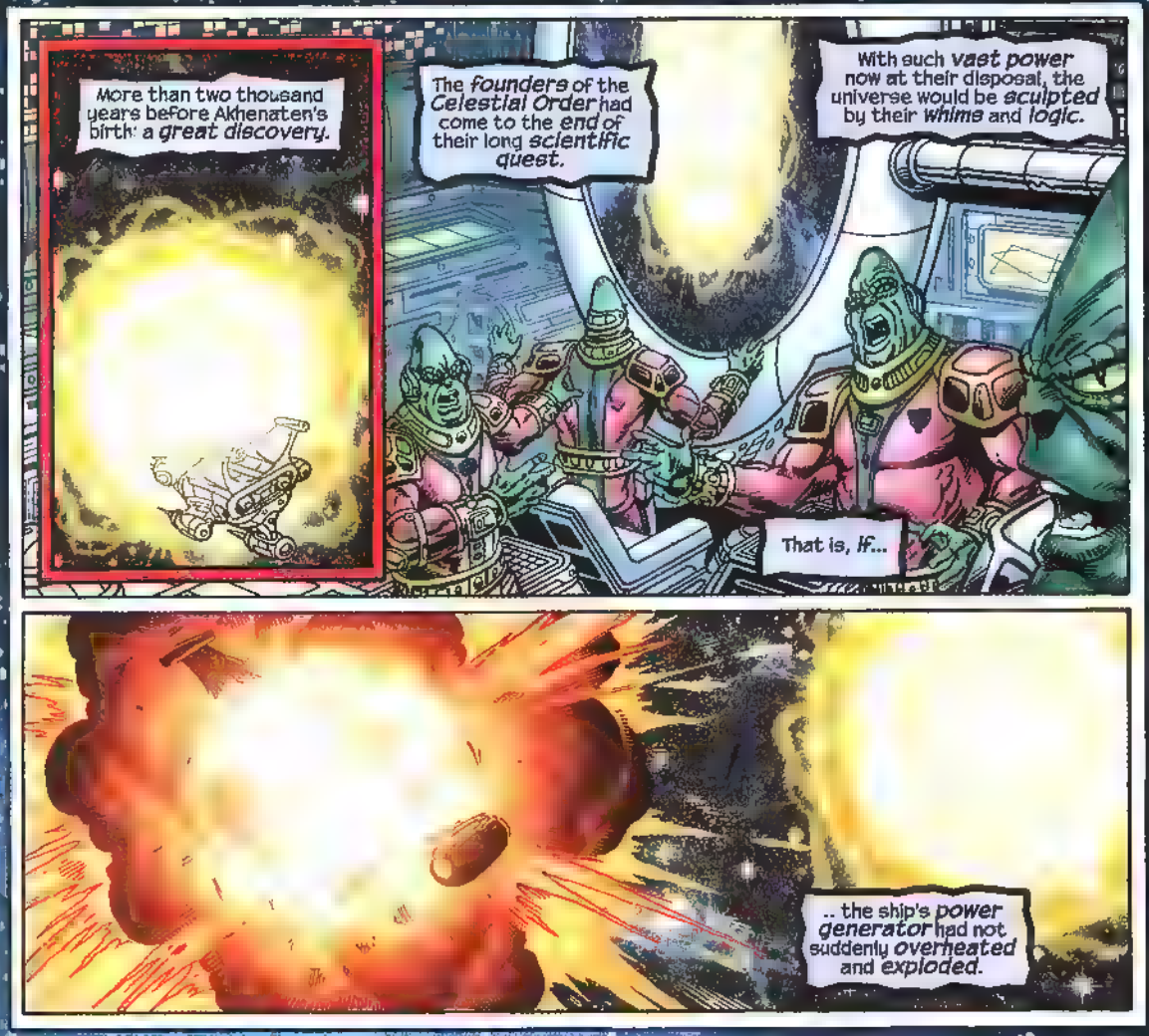
NO!
YES!
No, a, things are about to change!
I could have been merciful, I suppose.
A mere thought would have denied Akhenaten access to the Heart's power.
But I wanted him to realize the full extent of his downfall.

So, Akhenaten, you would be my master?
Impossible!
You have tapped into the supreme power!
HOW?!
BLIND FOOL!
Can you not see that I am now power infinite!
I am supreme!
This cannot be.

You'll find no salvation in denial, little pharaoh.
Your bid for godhood has proven to be wanting.
Now failure's price must be paid!
I will not accept this!
The power still fills me!
Nothing will stand in the way of my restoring sacred Egypt to its rightful glory!
Die!
I think not.
This cannot be!
My victory was written in the stars!

Chi dish Akhenaten, use what sense is left to you.
Do you not perceive the truth that stands so clearly before you?
I have become the stars!
I am all!
And I have come to judge you, Pharaoh
You dreamed and schemed beyond your station
That I can understand.
But n doing so you challenged me That .

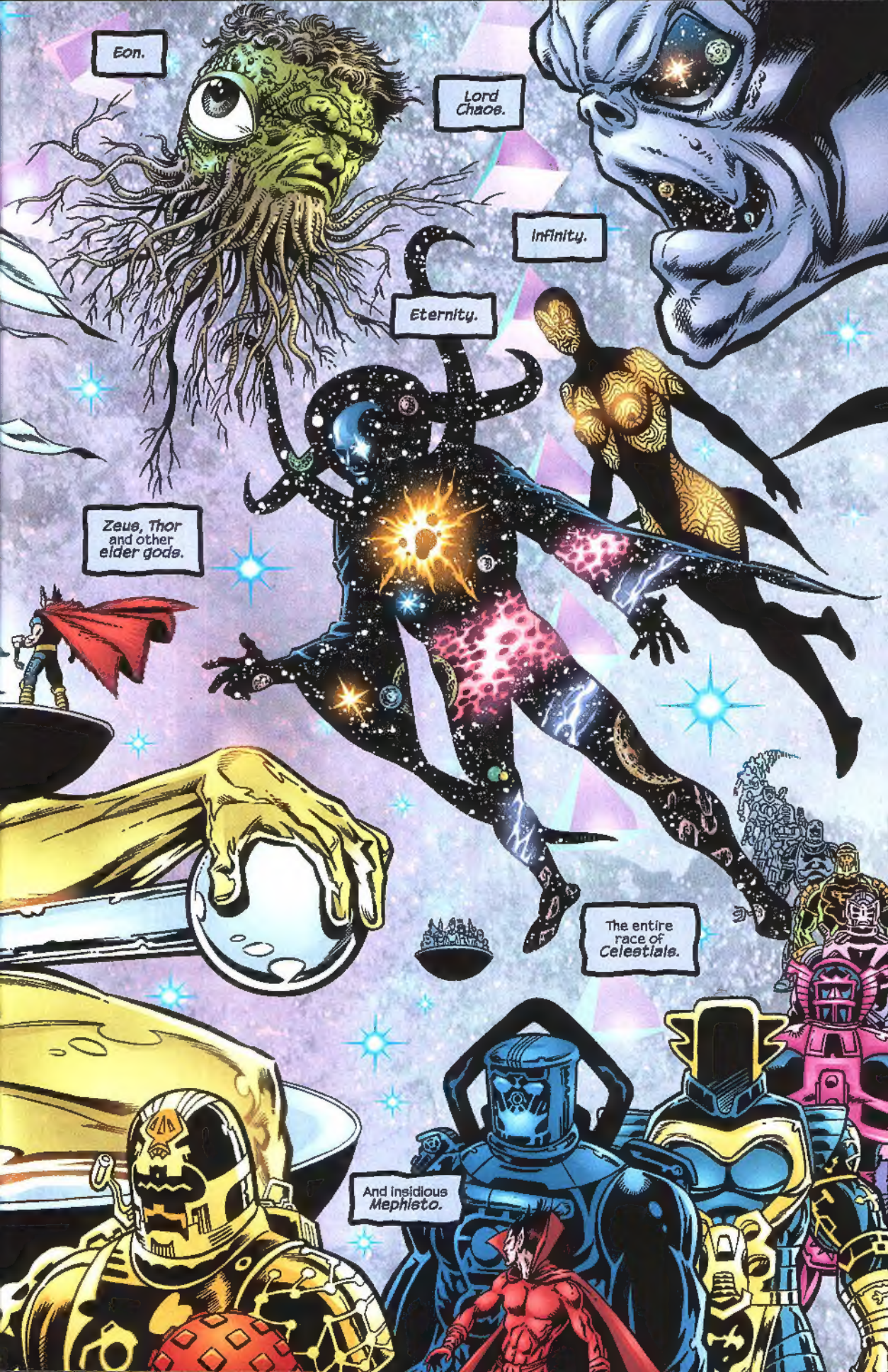
"...I can never forgive.
"But I will mercifully grant both you and Doom a second chance.
"If he allows you to escape, you live.
"If he doesn't..."
Go forth to your final rest, Pharaoh
Thanos the God grants you at least this small kindness.


More than two thousand years before Akhenaten's birth: a great discovery.
The founders of the Celestial Order had come to the end of their long scientific quest.
With such vast power now at their disposal, the universe would be sculpted by their whims and logic.
That is, if...
.. the ship's power generator had not suddenly overheated and exploded.

Within the hour, the first symptoms of the Black Curse were noticed among the Order's population.
The entire race would be dead in less than a week.
I did not allow them to suffer overly much.
They meant nothing to me.
Their extinction was but a precaution, not vengeance.

And so, all that had transpired since Akhenaten's return to Earth never occurred.
The planet's bickering nations continued to govern themselves, in their usual mad fashion.
Earth's champions resumed their uninterrupted lives without the slightest inkling of their recent demises and resurrections.
Perhaps a few, like Marvel, Strange and the Surfer, sensed something amiss, different.
But even they could not define their misgivings.
For what never was cannot be credited.
But there were some who did remember.
Those who could see behind the concealing curtain of change.
They who knew that everything in the universe had been dramatically altered.
And this they could not tolerate.

So ruled the Living Tribunal to his court of cosmic powerhouses.
All present were familiar to you.
Master Order.
Master Hate.
Mistress Love.
The mercurial Inbetweener.
Mighty Galactus.
The mysterious Stranger.
The ever-present Watcher.


Eon.
Lord Chaos.
Infinity.
Eternity.
Zeus, Thor and other elder gods.
The entire race of Celestials.
And insidious Mephisto.

So engrossed was I in reveling in my newfound omnipotence that I did not sense this fateful meeting.
But looking back, I now see that, even if I had confronted them at that moment, nothing much would have changed.
Some things are written in a medium more indelible than even the stars.
Certain dooms cannot be avoided.
All things must eventually come to an end.
TO BE CONTINUED...